



Lies, Damn Lies, & Statistics

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Comparison Sets for Public Libraries

There are two main sets of public library data:

PLDS – Public Library Data Service

The 2002 data was collected from more than 1000 public libraries. Majority of sample is from larger libraries. Cost \$80, discounts for ALA members

<http://www.ala.org/ala/pla/plapubs/pldsstatreport/pldsstatistical.htm>

FSCS- Federal-State Cooperative System

9,133 libraries were included in the 2001 survey. Free

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/public.asp>



What Happens to Those Pesky Surveys

- Data is aggregated on the state level
- Preliminary datasheet is available Jan. 1
- Earlier data may be available by calling Library Development.
- Data is double checked for noticeable anomalies- e.g. -,910, misspellings, numeric typos – e.g. 14,000 children's programs
- Federal data elements are separated out with data notes and edit checks are read.



Your data in process

- Federal data elements are separated out with data notes and edit checks are read.
- Data is sent to Census where it is checked for unusual values and your data notes are read.
- NCES publishes the data in E.D. Tabs and data is quoted in national sources.



Uses of data - National

- ALA – lobbies for libraries. Successful in working with others getting LSTA reauthorized with a “raised funding floor”
- Researchers working on information policy – Florida State U and Geolib
- IMLS – combines LSTA data with FSCS data to look at directions of future funding, library trends
- NCLIS - uses FSCS data “all the time” in promoting libraries, testifying to Congress, trying to secure federal funding via LSTA.

Data Condiments

- Organizations spice up and complement your library data nationally with other data from reputable sources, e.g. School Library Journal, Statistical Abstracts of the United States, U.S. News and World Reports
- Use reputable sources and cite them
- Try to find comparisons that “grab” your audience





Sound Bites

- Federal spending on libraries annually is only \$.54 per person.
- Americans check out an average of seven books a year. They spend an average of \$23 in taxes per year for the public library – much less than the average cost of one hardcover book.
- Americans spend more than three times as much on salty snacks as they do on public libraries.

(ALA. Quotable Facts About America's Libraries, 2001-2002)



More Sound Bites

- Each day U.S. libraries circulate nearly 4 times more items than Amazon.com sells
- U.S. libraries circulate 5.4 million items per day; FedEx ships 5.3 million items.
- Five times more people visit U.S. public libraries each year than attend U.S. professional and college football, basketball, baseball and hockey games combined

(OCLC. Libraries: How they stack up, 2003)



Uses of Data - State

- Reporting of circulation of children's materials supports request for Ready to Read state grant funds
- Open hours, MLS, staff, and programming affect Oregon Benchmark #38
- Statistics influence design of LSTA grant program for Oregon



State Sound Bites

- Books owned by Oregon public libraries, if stacked, would exceed the height of Hell's Canyon by 92 times*

**from Oregon Blue Book 2003, assuming average width of 1"*



Uses of Data - Local

- The #1 use of FSCS data is local
 - Advocating for the library
 - Raising funds
 - Justifying budgets
 - Planning and evaluation
 - Starting or justifying programs



Working with Local Data

- Find a “hook” to catch audience interest – may need to compare economic value, educational value, etc.
- Note trends
- Compare your library to others and to standards
- Look for causes and effects



Library Advocacy



- Library as serving whole community
- Power of per capita
- Frequent mention of library success
- What else could you buy with the tax money given to the library?
E.g. 1 tank of gas? 1 movie with popcorn? Or unlimited access to the library and all its programs and services?

Raising Funds / Justify Budgets



- How does your library stack up to others of same population?
- Can you document efficiencies?
- Use community support as leverage
- Compare library support to others agencies in the community



Planning and Evaluation / Starting or Justifying Programs

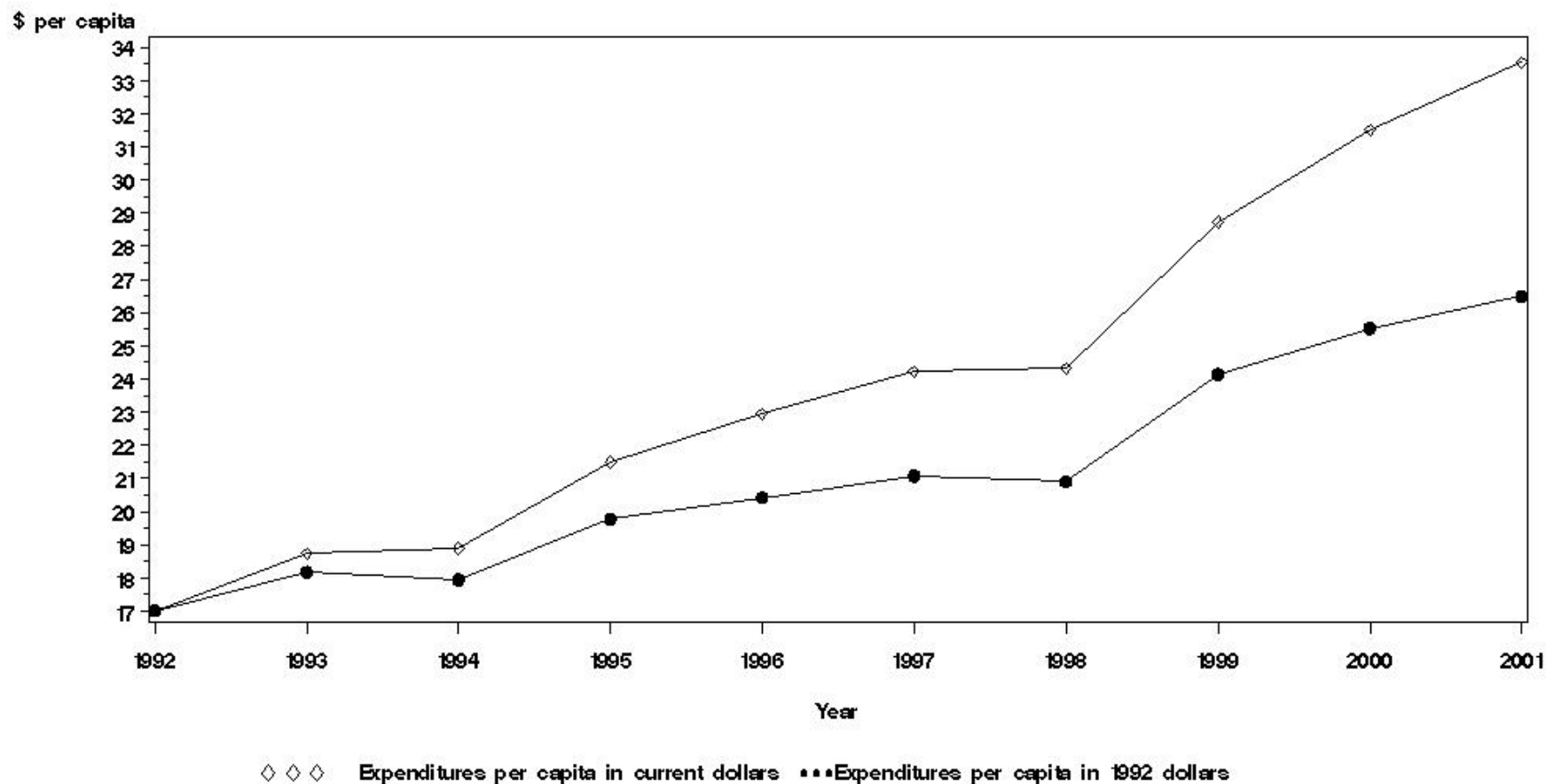
- What activities produce the results you want?
- Compared to state and national libraries, do you make efficient use of your resources?
- Value of constructing longitudinal data sets

OSL and NCLIS

Total Library Expenditures per Capita

In Oregon Public Libraries

1992—2001





The shifting sands of statistics

And how to avoid them...



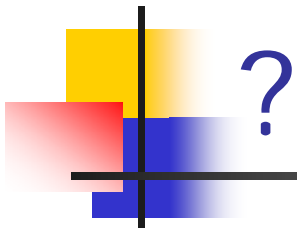
Shifting Sands

- Local control is important
 - Check for typos e.g. -,910
 - Check for accurate number input e.g. \$3,000 hourly salary
 - Do the figures fit your experience?
 - Statistical report not the same as other kinds of reporting – esp. fiscal
 - Undercounting



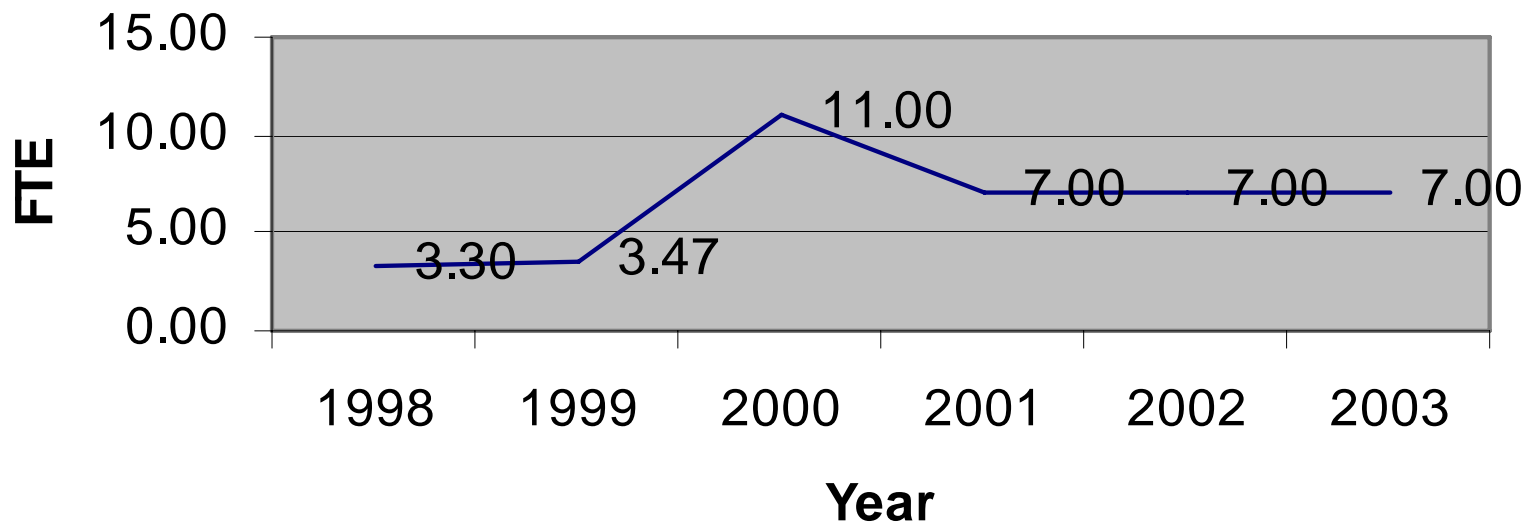
Shifting Sands

- Odd values – either unusual event or definition problem
- Analytic notes of unusual events can help
- Help track down cases of mangos and apples



Data from Jefferson County Library

Total Staff 1998-2003

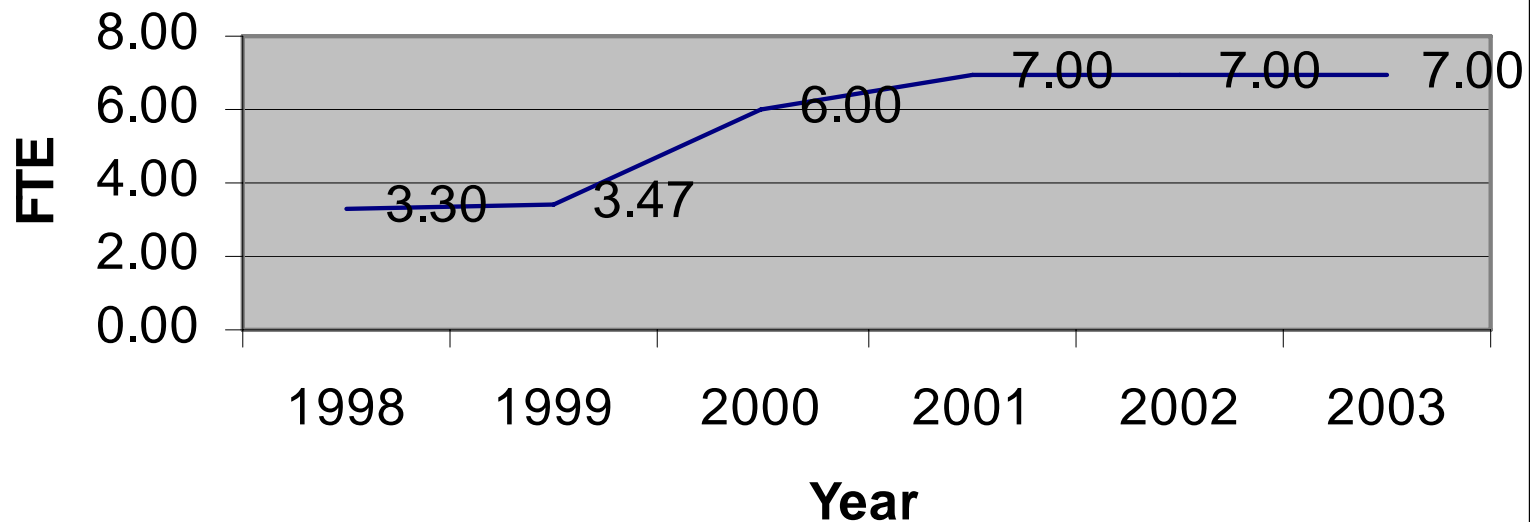




The Power of Stable Data!

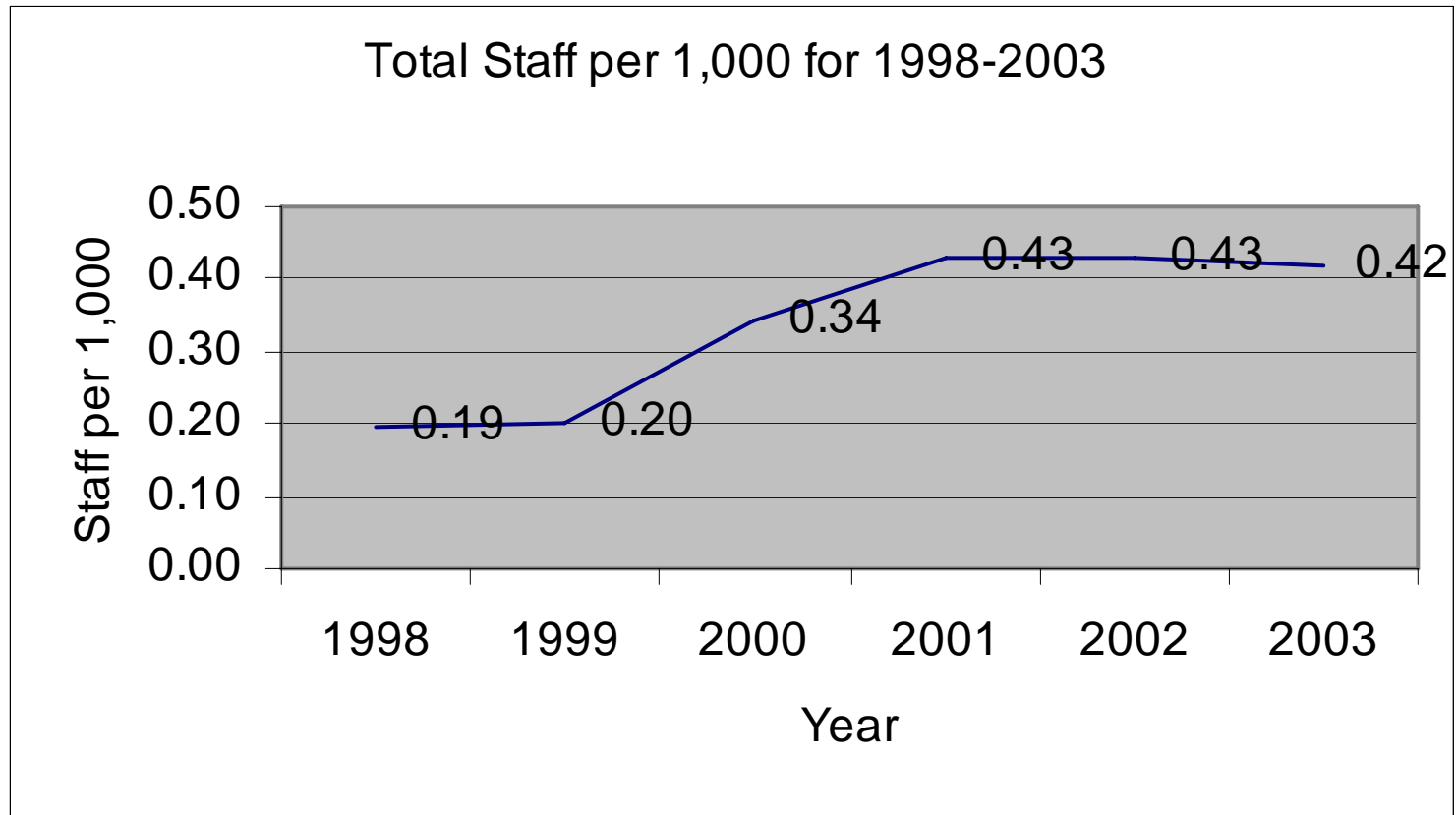
The Impact of District Formation on Jefferson CL

Total Staff 1998-2003



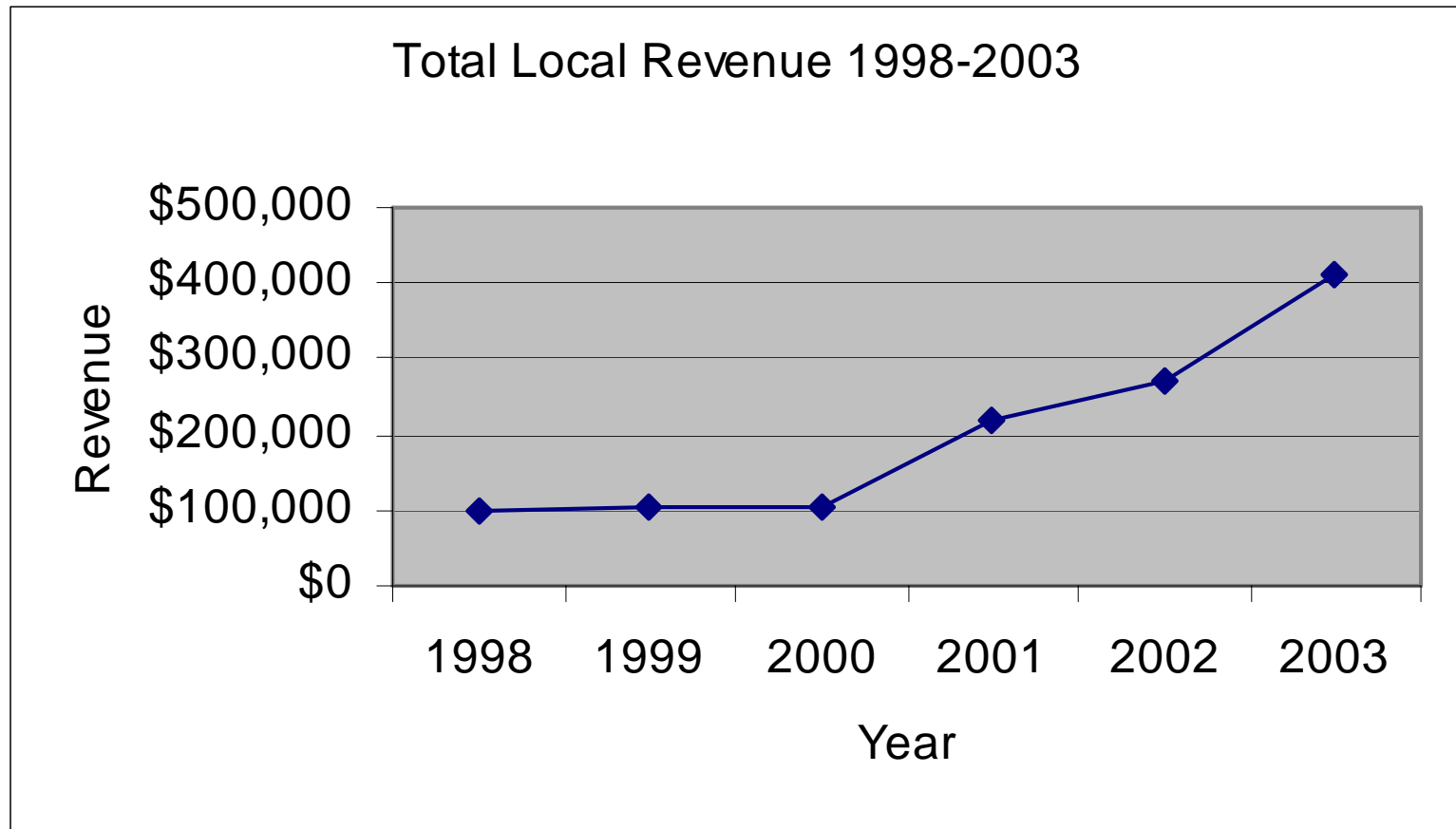


The Impact of District Formation on Jefferson CL



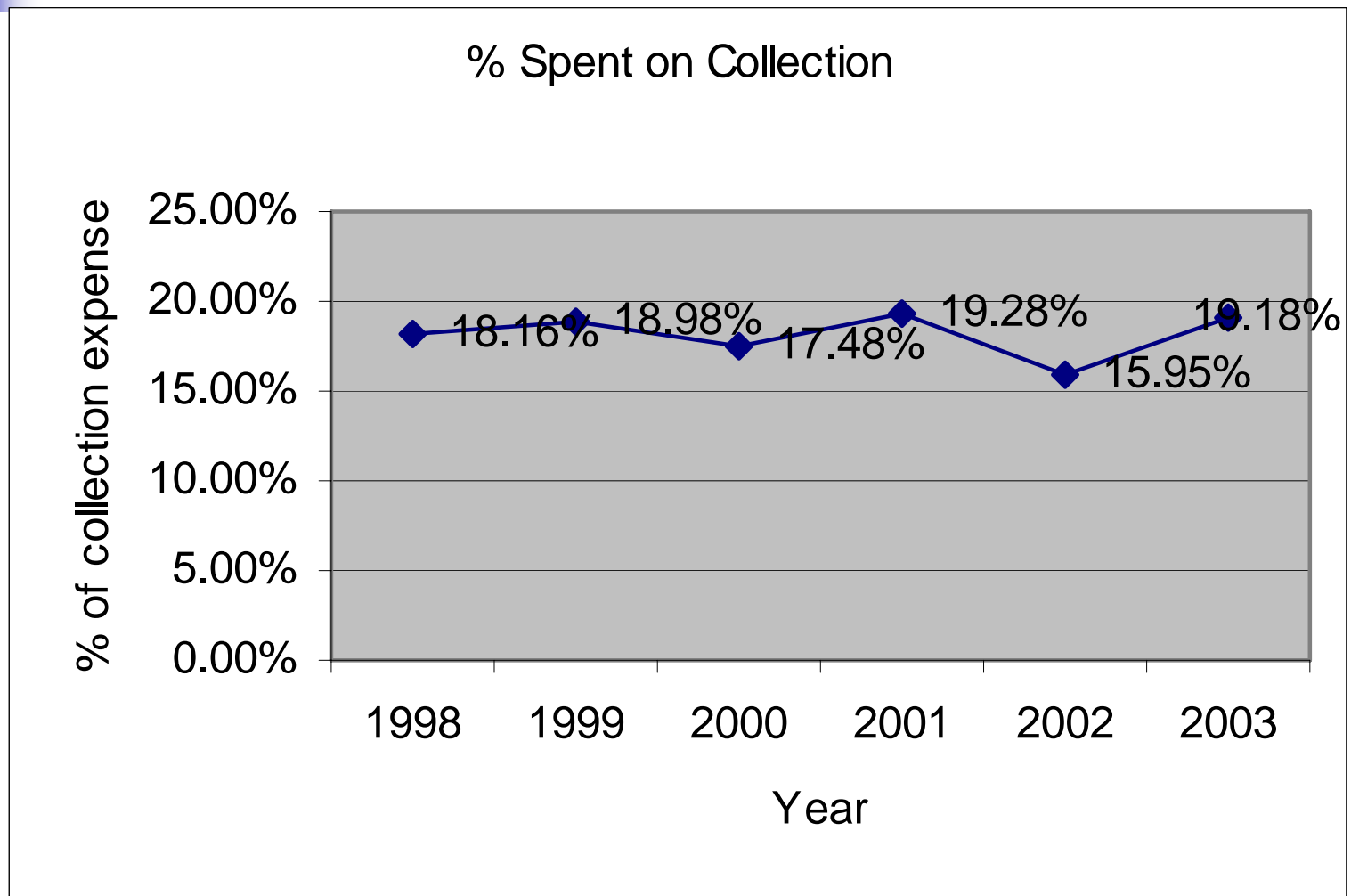


The Impact of District Formation on Jefferson CL



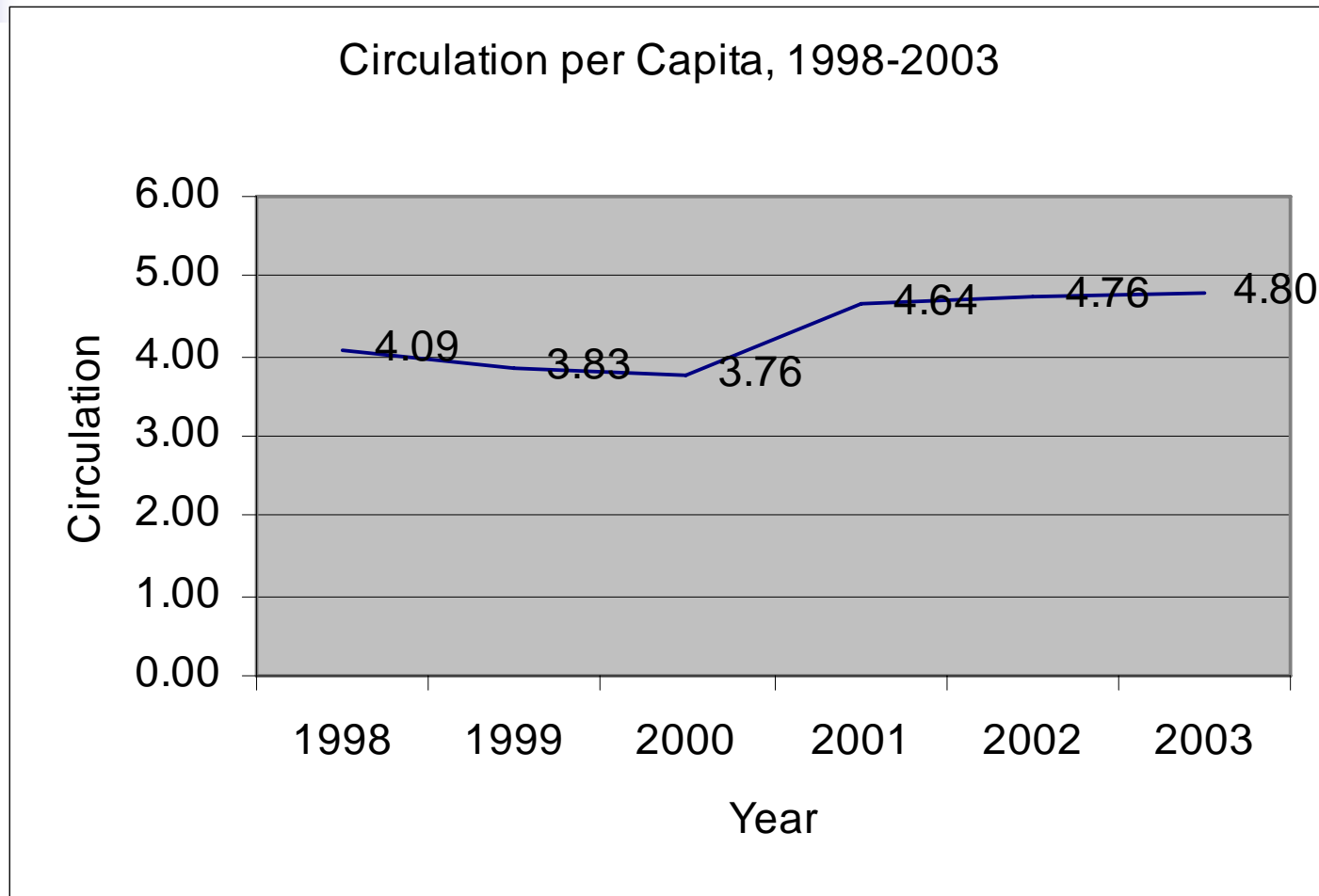


The Impact of District Formation on Jefferson CL





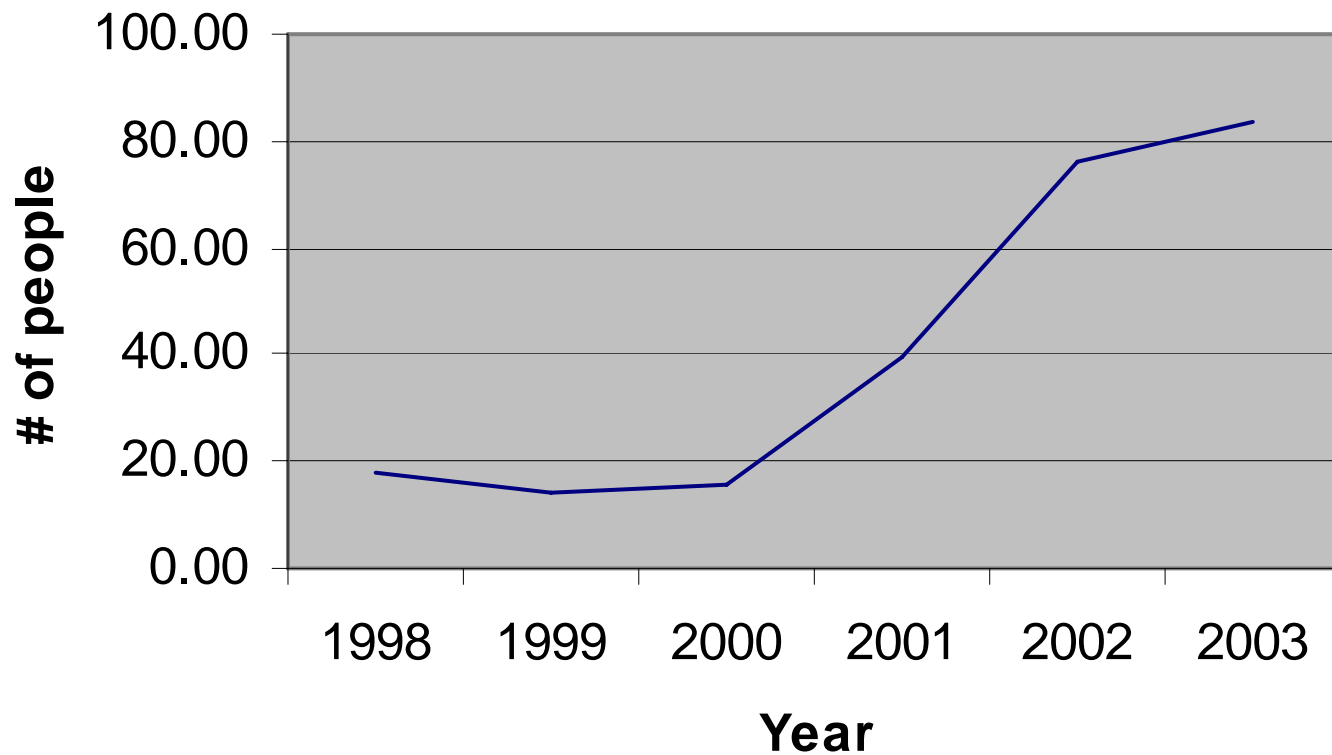
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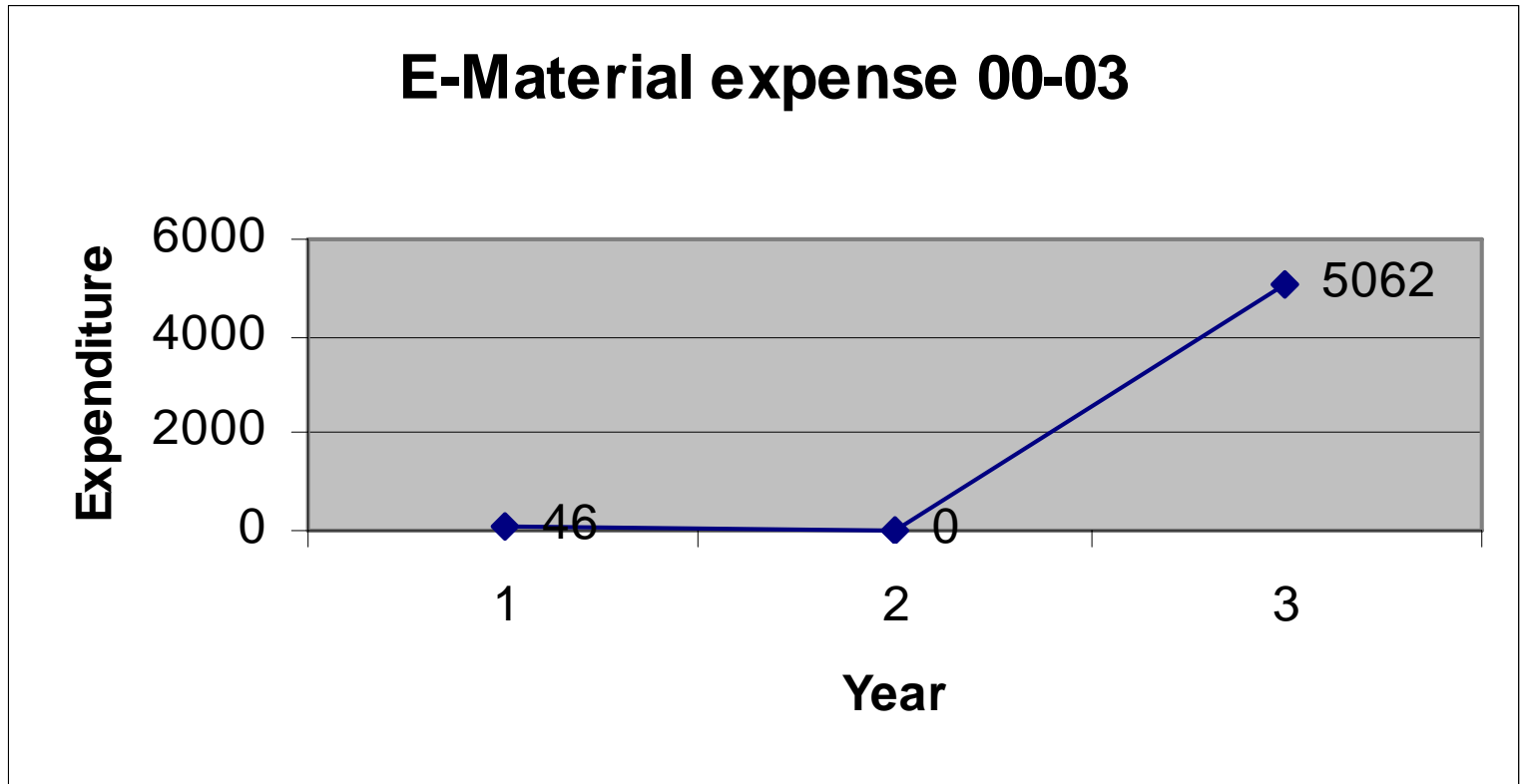


The Impact of District Formation on Jefferson CL

Program Attendance per 100



More sand...



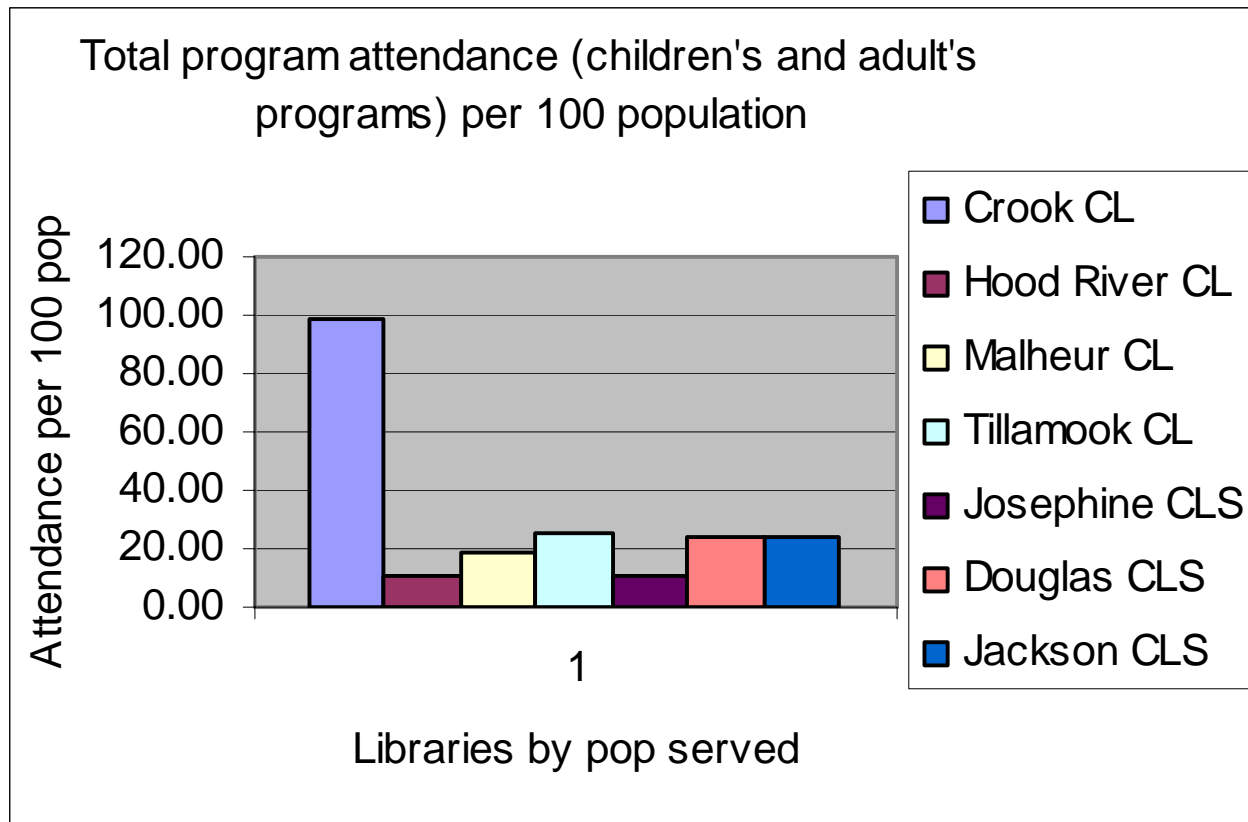


More Sand...

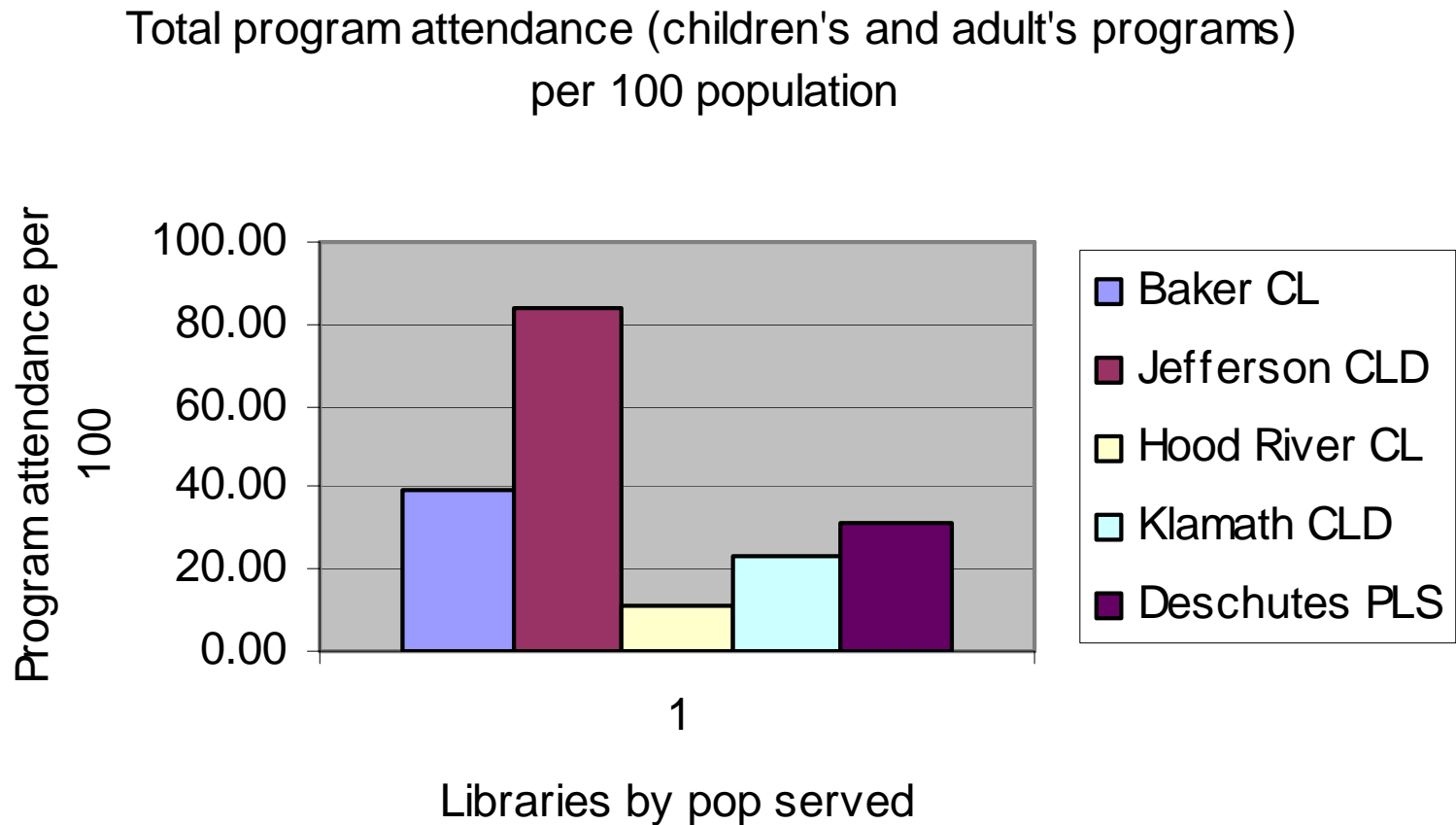
- Change in data element or definition over time... for older years, expense for electronic materials was split between software (inc. in collection) and electronic access (inc. in other operating cost)

A Whole Beach...

Problems in comparisons



More Beaches





Governance and Comparison

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ■ Library 1 | ■ Library2 |
| ■ Population 20,000 | ■ Population 20,000 |
| ■ Staff 9 FTE | ■ 10 FTE |
| ■ Revenue \$321,292 | ■ Revenue \$538,892 |
| ■ Print materials
\$34,829 | ■ Print materials
\$37,665 |
| ■ % spent on
collection 14.99% | ■ % spent on
collection 10.14% |

It takes a village to create good data



- We are all interdependent to produce data to promote libraries, plan and evaluate, fund raise and meet the needs of our communities
- Help is available from the Oregon State Library-call early, call often!